



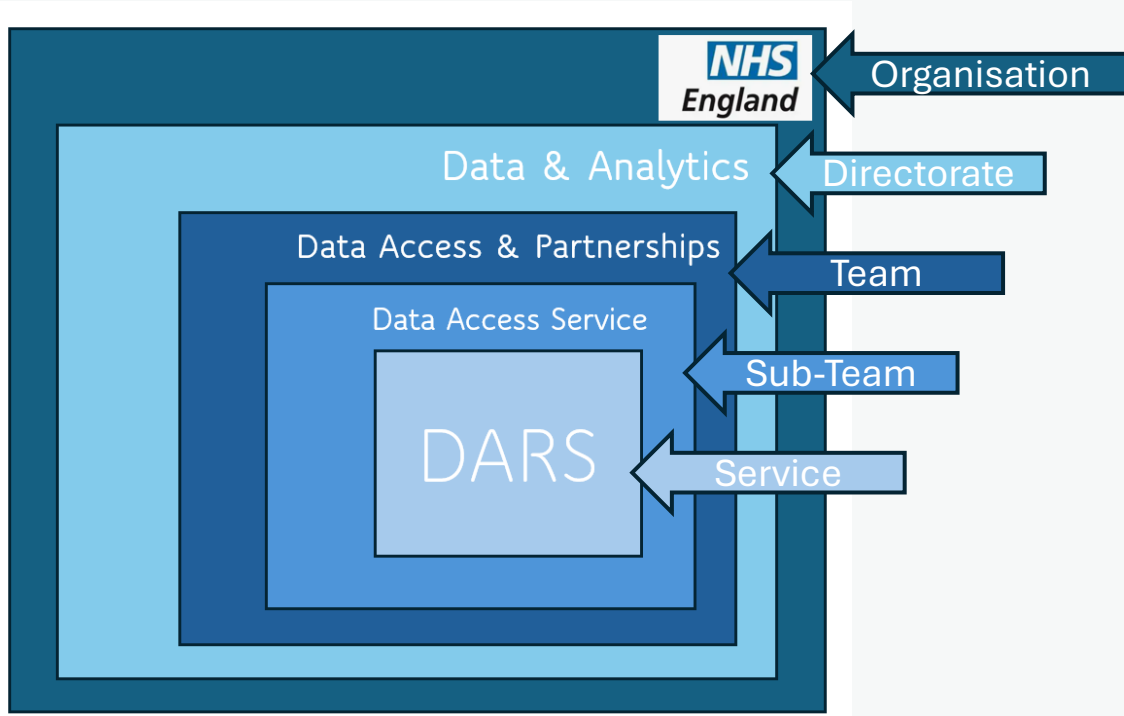
England

# Updates on Data Access at NHS England

April 2026



# Applications Service



## What do we do?

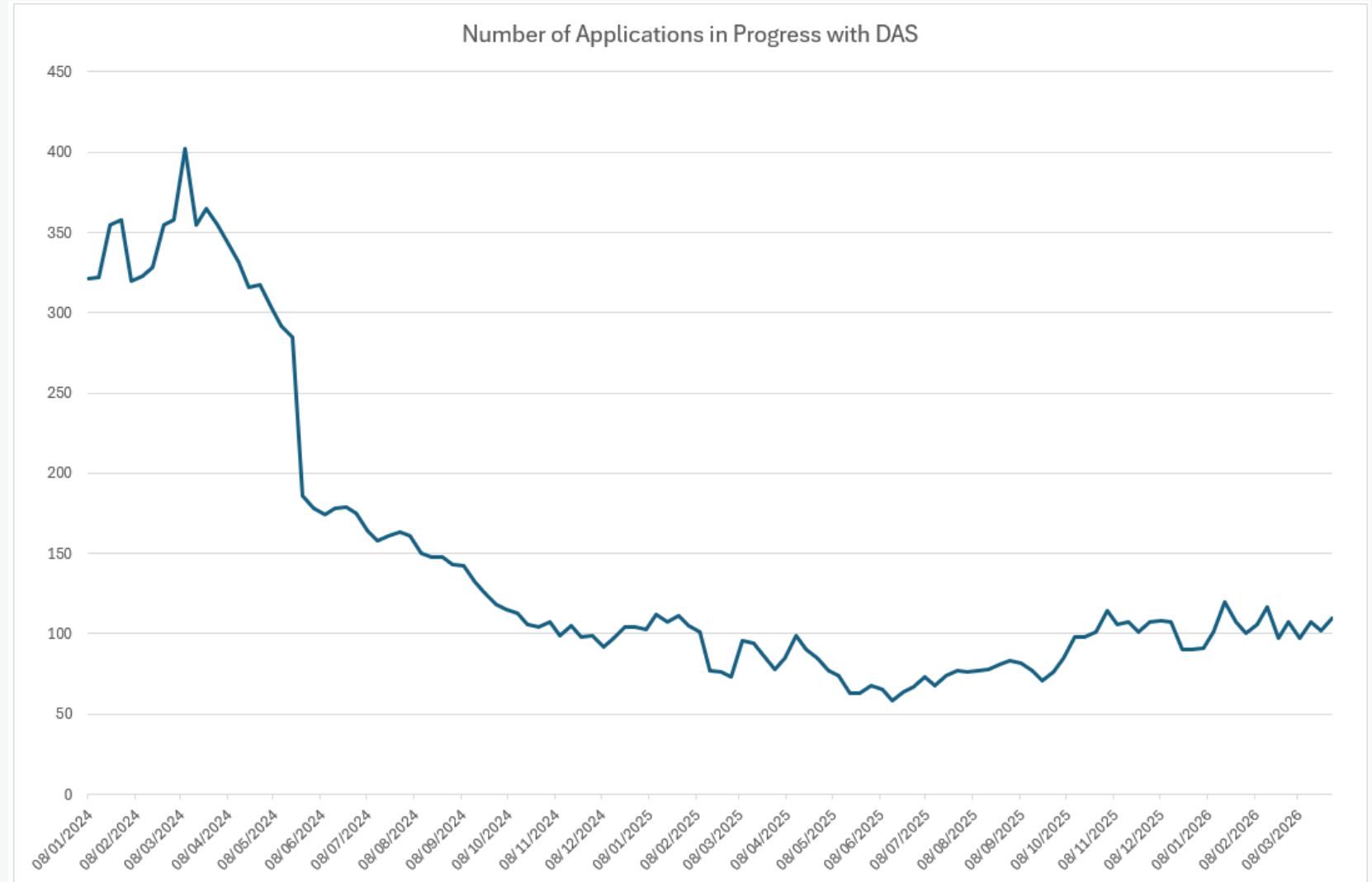
- We are the **gateway** to NHS England data access
- We manage data access requests from enquiry to fulfilment and manage the life cycle of Data Sharing Agreements through to termination and data destruction/access cessation
- We conduct legal, ethical, security and governance assurance
- We **enable** access

# Team Performance

## Backlog last 2 years...

400 → ~100 applications

- No system changes
- Changed how we work with applicants





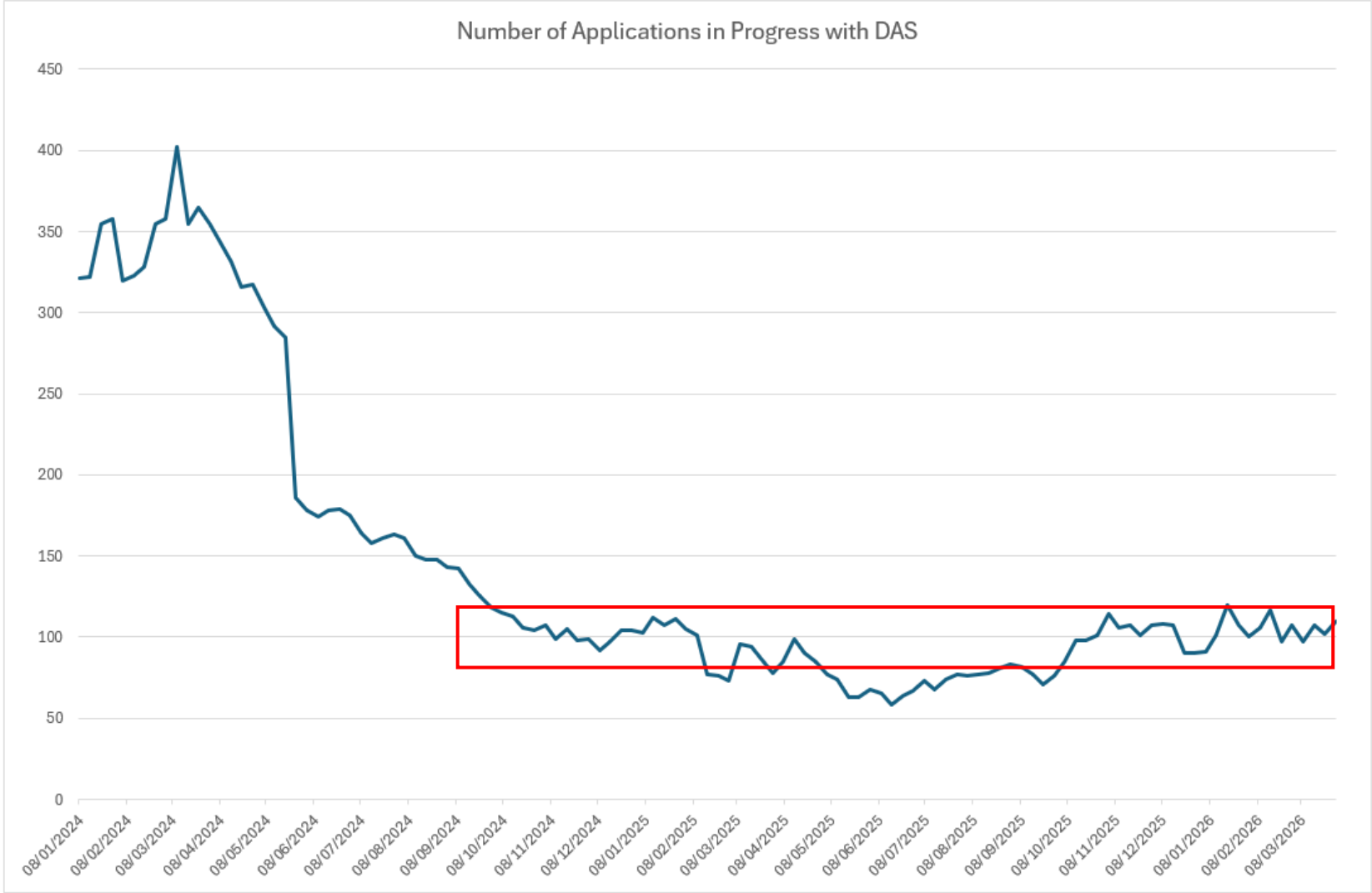
# Using our service

- Contact us early via [data.applications@nhsdigital.nhs.uk](mailto:data.applications@nhsdigital.nhs.uk)
- We will discuss your requirements
- We will assess feasibility and eligibility first
- We will work with you to populate your application
- We will tell you when you meet the criteria to apply
- When you are ready to apply we will progress your request for an approval decision as soon as possible

# Team Performance

Backlog last 2 years...

400 → ~100 applications





# Complex Data Access Models

## Changing Demand:

- Fewer single-purpose data access requests
- More complex access-requests
- Requests for delegated decision-making

## Constraints:

- Reduced staff headcount
- Growing demand



# Purpose Definition

A **purpose** is either:

- A specific research question or set of related specific research questions, **or**
- A defined activity such as a service evaluation or benchmarking, etc.

A DSA can either

- permit a *purpose* or *purposes* (by the above definition) or
- approve a defined **scope** of decision-making. All subsequently approved *purposes* must be objectively within that scope.



# Requirements for delegated decision-making

- End-to-end decision process document
- Clarity on decision-maker and advisors
- Assessment criteria – consistent with DARS
- Details of independent oversight including copy of Terms of Reference if applicable
- Transparency



# Assessment Criteria

- The requested purpose is sufficiently **narrow** and **precise**
- The purpose clearly demonstrates expected **benefits to health and/or social care in England and Wales**
- The purpose and proposed processing activities clearly align with the **scope of uses permitted by the DSA**
- Commercial access or services provided to commercial clients must be subject to a **balancing test weighing the public benefit against any commercial benefit**
- (Where applicable) uses are compatible with the **relevant permissions** such as **ethics** approvals, **consent** or **section 251 support** and the data will not be used in ways the data subjects (patients and service users) would not reasonably expect.



# Summary

- ✓ Come to us early and directly
- ✓ Expect prioritisation of more complex requests
- ✓ You can plan and prepare for when we have availability
- ✓ Look out for our new web content and further guidance on data access models
- ✓ Think **access over extract!**



# QUESTIONS?